

Message Text

SECRET

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1124

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ALEXANDRIA 0837

NODIS

DEPT PASS SECRETARY

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS)
SUBJECT: FAHMY'S COMMENTS ON REPORT OF SECRETARY'S TALKS IN
SAUDI ARABIA

REF: SECTO 08102

FROM AMBASSADOR IN ALEXANDRIA

SUMMARY: GAVE FAHMY REPORT OF YOUR TALKS IN TAIF WHICH
HE AT ONCE FORWARDED TO SADAT. PREDICTABLY, FAHMY VOICED
CONCERN ABOUT OUR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR UNIFIED ARAB
DELEGATION AND FAHD'S APPARENT ACQUIESCENCE IN CONCEPT.
IN ADDITION FAMILIAR EGYPTIAN ARGUMENTS AGAINST CONCEPT,
HE ARGUED THERE WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN SINAI I OR II IF
SYRIANS HAD BEEN PRESENT. SPEAKING HYPOTHETICALLY,
FAHMY THEN RAISED QUESTION HOW GOE CAN GUARANTEE TO PLO
LEADERSHIP THAT USG WILL SIT WITH THEM PUBLICLY IF PLO
ACCEPTS UN RESOLUTION 242? OTHER PERTINENT QUESTIONS
ARE WHEN SUCH MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE, WHERE, AND AT
WHAT LEVEL? EGYPTIANS AWAITING ARAFAT, WHO IS EXPECTED
ASK THESE QUESTIONS. WHILE AWARE YOUR STATEMENTS THAT
TALKS WOULD BE OPEN, FAHMY WAS CONCERNED THAT USG MIGHT
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HAVE TO RENEGE BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC PRESSURES. ANY SUCH
ACTION WOULD MAKE IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR SADAT AND FOR HIM.
HE RAISED POSSIBILITY OF PERSONAL LETTER FROM PRESIDENT
CARTER TO PRESIDENT SADAT ON THE MATTER. FAHMY NEXT
ALLUDED TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS
RE POSSIBILITY PLO ACCEPTING RESOLUTION 242 AND EXPRESSED
PUZZLEMENT WHY SUCH ANNOUNCEMENT HAD BEEN MADE NOW BEFORE

ISSUE RESOLVED. HE WONDERED WHETHER PRESIDENT CARTER HAS MORE INFORMATION ON PLO POSITION, PERHAPS THROUGH SAUDIS, THAN GOE HAS OR, ALONG MORE CONSPIRATORIAL LINES, WHETHER PRESIDENT CARTER HAD BEEN ADVISED TO MAKE SUCH ANNOUNCEMENT AT THIS TIME SO THAT IT WOULD FORCE PLO REJECT IDEA AND THEREBY SHIFT BLAME TO PLO LEADERSHIP FOR FAILURE. I REJECTED ANY SUCH SUGGESTION. FINALLY, FAHMY ARGUED THAT ONCE USG BEGINS TO TALK TO PLO, THIS IS DE FACTO RECOGNITION FROM WHICH SHOULD FLOW USG SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENT PLO REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA. FAHMY LIKELY RAISE ALL THESE POINTS WITH YOU DURING UPCOMING VISIT. END SUMMARY.

1. MET WITH FAHMY LAST EVENING TO GIVE HIM ACCOUNT OF YOUR TALKS IN TAIF (REFTEL). HE WENT THROUGH IT CAREFULLY AND AT ONCE ASKED AN AIDE TO TRANSLATE IT INTO ARABIC AND SEND IT ON TO PRESIDENT SADAT.

2. UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION: PREDICTABLY, FAHMY EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT OUR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION CONCEPT, TO INCLUDE THE PALESTINIANS, AND THAT FAHD SEEMED TO BE GOING ALONG WITH THIS CONCEPT. FAHMY NOTED SADAT WILL BE DISTURBED ABOUT THIS AND REPEATED FAMILIAR GOE ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE CONCEPT. FAHMY WAS SOMEWHAT RUEFUL THAT SADAT AND HE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO PERSUADE YOU THAT A UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION
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WILL HINDER RATHER THAN FURTHER THE ME PEACE EFFORT. IT WOULD ALLOW SYRIANS TO RESTRICT EGYPTIANS MANEUVERABILITY. I POINTED OUT THAT THIS IS NOT NECESSARILY THE CASE. ACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS WILL PRESUMABLY BE CONDUCTED IN COMMITTEES, WHERE EGYPTIAN FLEXIBILITY COULD BE EXERCISED. FAHMY CONTENTED THIS WILL NOT BE THE CASE WITH UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION. "YOU DO NOT KNOW THE SYRIANS," HE ARGUED. THEY WILL INSIST UPON FUNCTIONAL COMMITTEES WITH A SYRIAN MEMBER ON EACH. ROLE OF THAT MEMBER WILL BE TO KEEP EGYPTIANS FROM MOVING OUT AHEAD. WE WOULD NEVER HAVE HAD SINAI I OR II, HE ARGUED, IF SYRIANS HAD BEEN PRESENT. HE WAS CLEARLY VERY CONCERNED ABOUT CONCEPT, AND I SUSPECT BOTH SADAT AND HE WILL AGAIN RAISE IT WITH YOU DURING YOUR VISIT.

3. NATURE AND LEVEL OF POSSIBLE USG/PLO TALKS: FAHMY THEN SAID HE WISHED TO SPEAK ABOUT ANOTHER PROJECT, NAMELY, THE PALESTINIANS. GOE, HE NOTED, IS WAITING FOR ARAFAT TO ARRIVE. SUPPOSE, HE ASKED HYPOTHETICALLY, THAT PLO ACCEPTS FORMULA RE UN RESOLUTION 242, HOW CAN GOE GUARANTEE TO PLO THAT THE USG WILL SIT WITH THEM PUBLICLY. MOREOVER, THERE

ARE QUESTIONS OF WHEN SUCH MEETINGS WILL TAKE PLACE,
WHERE AND AT WHAT LEVEL. IT TURNED OUT THAT HE HAD
EARLIER IN THE DAY BEEN VISITED BY PLO EXCOM MEMBER
DAJANI, WHO--ACCORDING FAHMY--OPINED THAT ARAFAT WILL
GO ALONG WITH OUR REFORMULATION. DAJANI APPARENTLY
ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT ARAFAT WILL WANT TO HAVE ANSWERS
TO ABOVE QUESTIONS AND ESPECIALLY AT WHAT LEVEL SUCH
TALKS MIGHT TAKE PLACE. FAHMY STRESSED THAT IF PLO
ACCEPTS REFORMULATION AND IF THEREAFTER FOR REASONS
OF DOMESTIC PRESSURES OR OTHERWISE USG DOES NOT MEET
PUBLICLY WITH PLO, IT WILL MAKE SADAT'S AND HIS POSITION
VERY DIFFICULT. IT IS THE GOE AND SAUDIS WHO ARE URGING
PLO TO ACCEPT REFORMULATION. SYRIANS HAVE ALREADY TOLD
PLO THEY HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH REFORMULATION IDEA.
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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 ALEXANDRIA 0837

NODIS

DEPT PASS SECRETARY

FROM AMBASSADOR IN ALEXANDRIA

4. I REMINDED FAHMY THAT YOUR EARLIER MESSAGE ON THE
REFORMULATION HAD INDICATED OPEN TALKS. MOREOVER, AS
HE HAS HIMSELF TOLD ME, YOU HAD ASSURED SADAT AND HIM
THAT ANY SUCH TALKS WOULD BE OPEN. IN THE CIRCUM-
STANCES, I THOUGHT HE SHOULD TAKE OUR WORD ON THIS
MATTER. FAHMY SAID HE DID NOT DOUBT OUR GOOD FAITH,

BUT WAS AWARE OF US DOMESTIC PRESSURES WHERE THE PLO IS CONCERNED. HE RECALLED USG HAD ONCE BEFORE, IN EARLY DECEMBER 1973, RENEGED ON A COMMITMENT CONCERNING PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA. THIS HAD CAUSED GOE CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT WITH SYRIANS AND PLO LEADERSHIP, WHICH THE GOE IS NOT ANXIOUS TO REPEAT. YOUR EARLIER MESSAGE HAD INDICATED THAT THE ISSUE IS A CONTROVERSIAL ONE IN THE US, HENCE GOE MUST TREAD WARILY. HE WONDERED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A PERSONAL LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO PRESIDENT SADAT, WHICH WOULD GIVE ASSURANCES THAT TALKS WITH THE PLO WILL BE OPEN AND INDICATE TIMING AND PROPOSED LEVEL. I POINTED OUT THAT FOR THE MOMENT THE QUESTION IS STILL HYPOTHETICAL, HENCE HE COULD HARDLY EXPECT AN ANSWER. HERE AGAIN, I SUSPECT, THAT EITHER SADAT OR HE WILL
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RAISE THE MATTER WITH YOU.

6. PRESIDENT CARTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE: FAHMY THEN ALLUDED TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH THE PRESIDENT HAD SPOKEN OF POSSIBILITY THAT PLO MIGHT ACCEPT RESOLUTION 242. FAHMY EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT THAT SUCH A PUBLIC STATEMENT HAD BEEN MADE AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME, BEFORE THE ISSUE IS RESOLVED. IT SEEMED TO SUGGEST THAT PRESIDENT CARTER IS "DEAD SURE" ON THIS POINT. IT MADE HIM WONDER WHETHER PRESIDENT CARTER HAS MORE INFORMATION ON THE PLO POSITION THAN GOE HAS. PERHAPS WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED WORD, EITHER THROUGH THE SAUDIS OR SOMEONE ELSE, THAT THE PLO HAS ACCEPTED THE REFORMULATION AND THEREFORE SAW FIT TO ANNOUNCE IT. FAHMY ALSO HARBORED A MORE CONSPIRATORIAL THOUGHT. PERHAPS ONE OF THE PRESIDENT'S "ADVISORS" HAD RECOMMENDED THAT SUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT BE MADE NOW IN THE BELIEF THAT WILL FORCE THE PLO TO REJECT THE IDEA, WHICH WOULD THEREAFTER ALLOW THE BLAME TO BE SHIFTED TO PLO LEADERSHIP FOR SCUTTILING THE EFFORT.

7. I POINTED OUT TO HIM THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S LANGUAGE HAD BEEN CAREFULLY GUARDED AND THAT HE HAD NOT MADE ANY DEFINITIVE STATEMENT THAT THE PLO HAS ACCEPTED THE REFORMULATION. INSTEAD, PRESIDENT CARTER HAD SIMPLY EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE PLO MIGHT DO SO IN ORDER TO ENABLE US TO BEGIN A DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO, WHICH MIGHT IN TURN OPEN AN AVENUE FOR PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA. I REJECTED FAHMY'S THEORY THAT PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT HAD ANY CONSPIRATORIAL PURPOSE, SUCH AS PREMATURELY ABORTING THE EFFORT. I TOLD HIM WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPECT A LITTLE MORE CONFIDENCE FROM HIM THAN

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HIS COMMENTS WOULD SUGGEST. FAHMY SAID HE HAD FULL CONFIDENCE IN US, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO USG AND THE PLO, EXPERIENCE HAS MADE HIM SUSPICIOUS.

8. FINALLY, FAHMY ARGUED THAT, ONCE PRESIDENT CARTER AGREES TO TALKS WITH THE PLO, HE IS IN EFFECT GIVING DE FACTO RECOGNITION TO THE ORGANIZATION. IN THAT CASE, THERE SHOULD BE NO REASON WHY IT SHOULD NOT BE INDEPENDENTLY REPRESENTED AT GENEVA. IF BOTH CO-CHAIRMEN AND MOST OF THE PARTIES AGREE, THIS SHOULD BE ADEQUATE. HE RECOGNIZED ISRAEL WOULD NOT AGREE, BUT ISRAEL SHOULD BE PUT IN A POSITION WHERE IT IS ISOLATED IN ORDER TO BRING IT AROUND. I REMINDED HIM THAT ON THAT POINT, YOU HAD MADE CLEAR TO THE SAUDIS THAT WE COULD NOT GUARANTEE THE OUTCOME OF THE NEGOTIATIONS RE THE NATURE OF A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND AND THAT THE FORM OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA WAS NOT SOLELY FOR US TO DETERMINE. IT HAD TO BE AGREED TO BY ALL THE PARTIES, INCLUDING ISRAEL. FAHMY WAS CLEARLY STILL WORRIED ABOUT UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION IDEA AND ARGUED THAT USG, ONCE TALKS WITH PLO BEGUN, SHOULD LOGICALLY ACCEPT INDEPENDENT PLO DELEGATION. HE WILL DOUBTLESS RAISE POINT WITH YOU ON UPCOMING VISIT. CHASE

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